a dead spot of light magazine

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Introduction

If the first six months of 2026 are a precursor of the things to come, then I would like to request an escape to a different time or planet. Since I like to separate my private life and my hobbies, I refuse to elaborate on parts of it, but the heat wave that took hold of Germany in June 2026 was anything but fun. In fact, it was more than just a little nuisance. But this increase in heat will apparently foreshadow the things to come.

Well, this gives a bit of an insight on why there are fewer interviews and a good portion of shorter reviews. There was simply not the time and energy to get the stuff done.

I really would like to thank the band Sarama as well as Nebel Lang for the interviews. Hopefully, they offer a good and enjoyable reading.

One small side note:
for me as a writer, things would be easier, should the band information on Bandcamp, my current preferred site for buying music, offer a bit more than the tracklist. Translations of the tracks would be nice, as well as of the album. Why do I write this? Well, Livija Gemma's "Dangus jau rausta" was initially translated erroneously by an AI.

First attempt: The Sky is already tearing.
Second attempt: The sky is already turning red/blushing

There is a difference, and it can have an impact on the review and the text. So, please, please, please, be generous with your knowledge of your local tongue and offer some translations. Much appreciated.

On the tech behind this magazine:
A lot has happened in terms of the building process. The Python and the Typst, upgraded to v0.15.0, environment have received some minor polishing. Most of it has remained the way it is.

Metal Archives Graphs:
I have released an updated version of the "Metal Archives Graphs" and it looks great:

https://metal-archives-graphs.neocities.org

There are also reviews and their evolution covered now. It is really comprehensive already.

Since people approached me about supporting me, you can do that via the Ko-fi as well as the Substack links below.

I hope you find some joy and inspiration from the strange lines that I have written in this magazine. Feedback is always appreciated, and please do not hesitate to contact me.

Next edition? Around the end of September 2026, probably.

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Cover: *Melody* (1904) — Henry Meynell Rheam (1859–1920).

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Interviews & Reviews

Sarama

Poland | Folk, Acoustic, Instrumental

Q: Who are you, and where are you from?

Hello there, thank you for talking with us! So Sarama is a quartet based in Cracow, Poland, composed by Adrianna, Aleksandra and Kacper from Poland and Tiago from Portugal.

Q: When and why did Sarama start? How did the four of you come together?

Originally we started in the end of 2018, Kacper and Tiago were introduced by a common friend from Spain, saying they should meet and play together. Adrianna joined after meeting Tiago at a jam session, and Aleksandra joined at the end of 2019 after being invited to join a rehearsal and try out her traditional polish instruments with the music that was being created and we're together since then.

Q: What is the story behind the band name? Does it have a particular meaning, and how does it connect to your music?

The name showed up in a very unexpected but natural way! So Kacper had a lot of melodies he composed on guitar and the rest of the gang was then "how to make this more folk?" one day we were discussing and noticed that Kacper had a very peculiar and not polish sounding surname, Sarama, so as we were a combo of Portuguese and Polish, why not give a name that was also rather neutral to its origin….Which was rather funny as when we made our social medias, we found out that Sarama is the name of a type of traditional Thai music played during Muay Thai fights! How did we learn this? We had lots of Thai people writing to us randomly, it was quite funny! Especially as it doesn't match the energy of our music at all!

Q: Your instrumentation is quite unusual: guitar, drums, suka biłgorajska, erhu, hurdy-gurdy and whistle. How did this combination come about? Was it a conscious choice from the start, or did it evolve as members joined?

In this probably Tiago pushed to more traditional instruments as he himself plays traditional percussions from Portugal and Poland, Adrianna who normally played piano and keys, was also starting her Hurdy gurdy adventure when they met, so it all fell into place naturally as Kacper was curious how his electric and acoustic guitar skills would match this. When Aleksandra joined with her instruments it was official that all matched together organically.

Q: The suka biłgorajska is a rather rare instrument, even within Polish folk circles. Could you tell us a bit about it and why you decided to include it? And the erhu is even more unexpected, given its Chinese origin. How did it find its way into a Polish folk band?

Well, Aleksandra was finishing her studies on "knee fiddles" in the Music Academy university of Cracow when she met the band, and as she was playing in her studies most of these instruments, it was pretty much a game of "what will fit here better? " Although when we started playing, there was always a lot of curiosity towards Suka Biłgorajska and Fidel Płocka, so we thought it could also be a cool way to spread two polish instruments

that are having a revival in the last decade to the listeners…Erhu was also funny as Aleksandra played some concerts in China and brought one to practice and study, so, ended up making some appearances in our songs!

Q: How does the songwriting take place in Sarama? Is it a collective process, or does someone tend to bring the initial ideas?

Luckily, Kacper just needs to grab the guitar to compose a melody, and this was perfect as he would play something and the rest of the group would "folkify" the melodies, so all and all the process was always very straightforward for us and felt very natural.

Q: Your music is entirely instrumental. Was this a deliberate decision, or did it just happen this way? Have you ever considered adding vocals?

We were asked this often, quite often even! Seems like for many people, a song needs to have a singer. As none of us was actually a singer or interested in writing lyrics, we worked with what we have and at a certain point it felt like a singer wouldn't match our idea of our music.

Q: "Four Seasons" (2023) is a rather peculiar release. The track lengths differ considerably: spring is by far the longest, while autumn and winter are very short. What was the idea behind this imbalance? Was it intentional, or did it reflect how much material naturally emerged for each season?

This question is super interesting, as we never thought of how long or short a song should be, we would just make the skeleton of the song, see how it sounded for us, decide if part A should be repeated or shortened, if something was missing between B and C…. So thinking about your question, it seems like we just want to have long springs and short falls and winters!

Q: Why does the album open with spring rather than following the traditional cycle, and why does winter close it?

Funny we play so many traditional instruments and not being very traditional at the same time…. It just felt right for us, in Poland winter can feel very long, so everyone is waiting impatiently for spring, so we just hoped our listeners would get this warm feeling that the sun is coming along with the new green leaves and adventuring through life until when the snow returns and nature goes back to sleep… Might sound cheesy and cliche, although each season does bring its specific emotions and feelings with it and we need to travel through them.

Q: When listening to "Four Seasons", I noticed that the tracks share common elements in terms of dynamics and approach, despite each being dedicated to a very different season. Was this coherence intentional, or did you also consider venturing further apart in mood between the four pieces?

There was some intention, maybe a mix of every band member emotional interpretation of each season, like reaching a consensus of "how do we feel in this season, and this one"

Q: "Path of Years" (2026) gathers material from five years of activity. Why did you pick this moment to look back, and how did you decide which tracks to include?

It felt just right, we were playing for half a decade, we as people were growing, our feelings and connections to the songs were in the right place so it felt like all pieces were coming together to officially record those songs and have something for the future of us together… Especially as we are quite old school in the sense of enjoying physical formats, so having an ep and a cd feels like an achievement!

Q: Interestingly, “Matter of Light”, your longest single from 2021, was left out of “Path of Years”. Why?

No special reason, we kept for a future release where it will fit the concept better! It’s funny because we rehearse weekly, religiously and often we end up preparing some new songs and then put them on the shelf to be picked up later on to be worked again….. Might sound strange, but some ideas might start blooming and out of nothing staying in the blooming phase for long periods of time. So don’t worry, Matter of Light is just waiting for its moment!

Q: The tracks from “Four Seasons” appear scattered throughout “Path of Years” rather than as a block, but still in the order of the seasons - and starting with autumn. What was the thinking behind this sequencing?

A block in our opinion wouldn’t make sense, as then would be a copy paste of our ep… We were listening to the songs and thinking how it would feel more natural from one to the other and we ended up enjoying this order, mostly to show that we humans go through various emotions between seasons, just as our lives.

Q: How would you describe Sarama’s sound to someone who has never listened to your music?

Atmospheric, cinematic, like a soundtrack to someone’s life, with calmer and more agitated moments…After all life has its ups and downs!

Q: What bands or musicians have influenced you? Are there particular folk traditions you draw from, or do the influences come from elsewhere as well?

Hard to say, we do get inspired by a lot of different things but would never say A or B specific… Some of us are very interested in slaviccculture and traditions, Tiago of course has his connection to Portuguese music and traditions, not sure we ever stopped to say “This and this are our inspirations officially” specially as we as four people playing together are very different from each other.

Q: How do you fit into the Polish folk scene? Is there a community of bands working with traditional instruments, or do you feel rather isolated in what you do?

It’s very interesting, as we never played a specific style purely, we ended up falling in various umbrellas, so our audience was always very mixed, from people from metal to folk or classic music, which makes us happy, guess music really brings people together!

Q: Do you play live regularly? How does music with such instrumentation translate to a stage setting?

We used to play way more live, our lives changed a lot and the music of the band also reflects that in its way, how we feel and such…. Regarding stage setting, there are some details that are lost or difficult to replicate live, like the fingers touching the strings without playing of hands on the skin of the drum, but that ends up adding some surprise for the listeners, after all, we tend to do some minor improvisations when we play.

Q: Anything else you’d like to add? What’s next for Sarama?

We want to give you a big thank you for reaching out to us and to all our friends, family and fans that followed us throughout the years, the next chapter of Sarama is in the making!

Sarama — Four Seasons

Poland | Folk, Acoustic, Instrumental | 2023

Release: `https://saramaband.bandcamp.com/album/four-seasons`

No, there is no reference to Vivaldi here. Sarama's music is different and attempts to be something else. Four tracks. Four seasons. Well, this appears to be rather reasonable, right? Well, the approach brings up some questions, though. Why is there such a large difference in track length? Why would autumn be the shortest of it all and spring the longest? Considering the effect of climate change should it not be different? Winter with only a glimpse in total, while the others are considerably longer? Maybe it would be possible to spin it around. A longer track reflects "a better time", a longing for those days of old, those days with longer winters and comfy sitting around the fire aka stove or another kind of heat spreading, man-made contraption. Yet such is not the case here. Not in the music, and presumably not around a stove either.

Interestingly enough the release opens with spring, but maybe this is due to the intention to give the music an initial positive spin, because this season is renowned for spreading love, encouraging people to form new bonds and leaving sparks in the people because of the increasing amount of sun and light. What about the music? Odd. Yes, this is a rather confusing and somewhat surprising way to describe this track, but it is exactly that. It is odd. A violin, a guitar and a hurdy-gurdy set the stage, whose part is later, and that makes it an odd thing, reprised at the end of this track. And to experience this is rather bewildering. Especially given what it says about the band's idea of spring. Is the opening a representation of the transition from winter to spring? And if this is the case, what does it say about the end of this "first" season and the looming summer? All in all, and leaving aside the oddity of song-writing for a moment, the track has a certain liveliness to it, which is especially due to the drums, which add a distinct "jumpy" dynamic to the performance. All of the instruments together create a harmonious, but not feverishly dancing around a tree sensation; but some of the ideas could help to spark it.

The summer has a thicker sound and is less engaging or lively. Rather than pushing the listener into some kind of bodily movement, it has a laid-back, relaxed quality (in the summer sun). It has playful moments, but slightly less so compared to the opener. A continuation in terms of the atmosphere, which appears varied though. Such is not the case in terms of the third season. It is first of all the shortest of all tracks, but also the mood is rather different. With a more dominant violin, the tunes have a more contemplative and introspective touch; which is also due to the hurdy-gurdy, whose play follows in line. There is nothing sad or melancholic about the music, but one cannot help but a sense of being lost, even though it would be difficult to actually pin-point it.

And the winter? How will the band perform the remaining season? The initial moments appear to foreshadow more of what had been presented before, but lead the listener astray, so to speak. Like falling snowflakes the sounds can be imagined and then something occurs, which one might not expect: silence. A mere nuance, but still of importance. Whilst the music is reappearing, it carries a spark of anticipation with it, a sense of something odd, bewildering and whether something would appear soon. Are we engulfed by snow? Are these twists and turns freezing winds? A melancholic tune by the hurdy-gurdy in the background appears contrasted by an accentuated play of the other instruments. Is this the twirling of snowflakes in the wind or the chaotic buzzing of the shopping malls, where people run around headless; driven mad by an incessant urge to buy stuff.

To conclude: four tracks, four different approaches, which each take a different view of a season.

What is slightly confusing is how the tracks have common elements in terms of dynamics and approach. While there may be differences in the arrangements and sound of each of the tracks, none ventures beyond this tight concept and one wonders why this is the case. Are all seasons somewhat similar after all? Do all these share a certain common aspect, on which their deviations from each other are just a marginal addendum? Questions. Ever more questions.

Sarama — Path of Years

Poland | Folk, Acoustic, Instrumental | 2026

Release: `https://saramaband.bandcamp.com/album/path-of-years`

"Sum up of our 5 years of playing around!" is the sparse information granted on the "Path of Years" Bandcamp entry. Except Sarama is not completely honest here. Their longest track, "Matter of Light" released in 2021 as a single, does not

show up on this compilation. The Polish musicians might have had a reason for leaving this one out, but if someone is a bit nitpicky, like I generally tend to be, then their complete discography reveals this missing track. One more thing: information regarding their albums is only offered sparsely, which makes placing them into a historical time frame impossible. Especially as they are rather similar in style musically. To offer a social service on my part, this is the line-up and as far as I can make out, the instruments used for this album: Kacper Sarama — guitar; Tiago Matos — drums, handpan; Aleksandra Niewiadomska — suka, erhu; Adrianna Kania — hurdy-gurdy, whistle. You are welcome.

Back in 2024, I wrote a review about their “Four Seasons” album, and it is worth noting that “Path of Years” shares tracks with this one. Oddly enough, one might suspect that the songs on this re-release appear along with the “other tracks”; maybe in a group to identify them readily. Such is not the case here. Instead, the ones from “Four Seasons” are placed scattered on this new album, but the order of the seasons feels slightly off, since it is autumn and not spring with which it all “starts”. The rest of the non-“Four Seasons” tracks appear placed around these. In total, ten tracks have found their place on “Path of Years”, which translates to over forty minutes of music.

All of these tracks fit together nicely. There is a clear coherence in sound and style between the various compositions. Instrumental folk music expressed with a surprising variety of instruments is the bottom line. A guitar, drums, a suka (Suka Biłgorajska), an erhu, a hurdy-gurdy and a whistle are used by the band and these give the music a very peculiar sound and touch. Mellow and contemplative describe the sound and character. There is gravitas inherent in the arrangements, which is carried by the strings and amplified by the drums. A slight counterpoint is the hurdy-gurdy, with its distinct sound, which hovers above or around the other string instruments. Amplified, the hurdy-gurdy helps to set a different tone and contrast to the well-known and established character of a guitar. This alone makes the listening experience unique.

To describe the performance, playfulness is one word that comes to mind, while togetherness is another. Closeness applies to the music as well. The four Polish musicians do a good job in expressing their approach to music. They have an idea, a concept of arranging the instruments, and they stick to their way of doing things. The music is at times driven by drums — “Pagan Poetry” or “A flight to nowhere” — while “Winter”, centre-piece of this album, presents a slightly muted and calmer tone, which only makes sense given the title. “Long Sails” comes with some additional percussion instruments.

“Path of Years” expands on their “Four Seasons” album and helps to present the music with a broader perspective. The six additional tracks help the band to offer a more diverse performance. Sarama play in a niche, but they do this really well. Ten songs with contemplative, introspective and charming tunes have found their way on this recording.

Interviews

Nebel Lang

Germany | Neoclassical, Ambient, Drone

Q: Who are you, and where are you from?

My name is Pablo Damián Ruiz Alcantú. I was born in San Rafael, Mendoza, Argentina in 1992. From a young age, I explored various artistic fields, as well as some high-performance sports. After completing secondary school, I started travelling to discover different places and cultures, learn new languages, and find my feet in an ever-changing and unjust world. I also developed my social skills and pursued a simple profession that has allowed me to express myself artistically without financial pressure or political constraints over the years.

I've just moved to Freiburg im Breisgau, a city in Germany. I'm really pleased with the change of scenery, and with how close I am to nature and the cultural life on offer.

Q: Could you please explain your project name, Nebel Lang, a bit? "Nebel" means fog, but "Lang" could be "long" or a surname—what does it mean to you?

I came up with the German wordplay "Nebel lang" by combining "Leben lang" ("life long") and "Nebel" ("fog"). It's a play on words that basically means "life long uncertainty". Leben and Nebel are anadromes.

Q: Can you guide a bit through the history of your project? When and why did it start, and how did it develop over the years?

It all began when I started playing the piano in my spare time during school holidays. I made the most of the fact that there were several pianos in different classrooms, as I didn't have one at home. The end-of-year recitals gave me the chance to perform in front of a large audience and experience the pressure of people listening intently. In my final years at secondary school, I performed my own compositions on the piano and guitar, which showed me what was possible. I went on to study for a degree in musical composition, but I dropped out because it wasn't what I was looking for. Even so, I would try to play and improvise something new whenever I had the chance to find a piano.

You could say that the Nebel lang project officially began when some of my recordings were shared online, particularly following the release of '00000' – for which I have Adriano Esteves to thank. He was a contact of mine on social media who was very enthusiastic about my recordings and thought it would be a brilliant idea to feature them on his wonderful YouTube channel "collectablesblog" alongside great artists, including Arvo Pärt. This sparked interest among his followers, with lots of likes and comments, and it made me realise that there are people who can relate to what I had been doing up to that point.

The project started out as '_ne', then became 'und_ne', and finally settled on 'Nebel lang'. Those name changes didn't help to promote the project at all, but I felt it was important to find a name that clearly represented what the project was all about — and that was easy to pronounce, of course.

Initially, the pieces lasted just a few minutes. Although they were improvised, I performed them as reproducible pieces with some flexibility; they felt more like composed works. Over the years, I began to place greater importance on the improvisation process – the moment when a motif or idea emerges. Once, while collaborating with videographer Raya Kim, she told me that, of all the recordings I had sent her, she preferred

the first one – not, as I had thought, the 'cleanest' one. I then realised that it wasn't just me who noticed a difference when playing something I already knew – the listener could perceive it too. Since then, the vast majority of the pieces I've released have been recordings of improvisations which I am now unable to play again, and I like that – the distance created by being able to see myself in the recordings but not play the same thing again.

Q: Do you have a professional education in terms of playing the piano, or are you self-taught? How did you learn this instrument?

Having learnt the basics of dance as a child, I was fortunate that my parents sent me to an arts secondary school, where I decided to shift my focus more towards music, specifically the piano. I learnt the basics and studied the classical composers, practising their respective exercises. I then forged my own path and continued to explore my abilities and potential, both on the piano and through other means.

I always say that I try to forget what I've learnt and let myself be guided by things that have become second nature and feel intuitive, but of course everything I've learnt is there in some way. I'm one of those people who draws on other artistic disciplines, uses analogies and sees things as a whole, so I'm always learning – both for music's sake and, through music, for life itself.

Q: What instrument do you use, and how would you describe your music? Why do you craft music in this particular kind of way?

Nebel lang has changed over time. It started with no big plans, just a want to record and share the music with more people. I kept going with persistence, and that's taken the project to a next level, given it a real meaning in my life. I have also learned so much from the project itself. Over time, I lost the fear of just sitting down at the piano without knowing what to play and letting myself be carried away by whatever came out, being patient and finding meaning in the sounds. What started out as a random mix of words and numbers now has an identity and a meaning. As the name suggests, it's all about exploring uncertainty. Nebel lang has so far only used acoustic piano, but I know I can apply the same idea to other instruments – we'll see what happens in the future.

Q: Your music seems to prioritize atmosphere and space over rapid changes or technical display. What draws you to this approach, and what is it you want to express? Do you use a particular piano or tuning to achieve this sound?

I like to create music that is austere and unpretentious, with a life of its own, rather than just a snippet of something or a technical demonstration. I'm not against speed or technical complexity, but I usually don't think it's necessary. To me, it's more of an embellishment than a foundation.

I usually play upright pianos, which have a certain mechanism and sound that suit the sound exploration I do under the name Nebel lang. I sometimes play grand pianos too, but they feel different, so I have to change a bit how I play. When it comes to tuning, I try to adapt my improvisation to the sound of the piano, which also includes its tuning. I'm not talking about a specific tuning temperament, but rather that if a key doesn't sound right, I'll skip it and play other notes. I apply this to everything that happens on the piano. For example, if a hammer makes too much noise, I might use it on purpose or skip it if it's not needed. I sometimes get the chance to tune the piano, and this helps me understand which notes – and consequently which intervals and chords – sound in one way or another. This in turn prepares me if I'm going to play on it.

Q: I wrote a review about the "Werkstatt-Konzert" release. Could you write a bit what can be found on this album? How did it all happen? How many people were there?

Sebastian just did it. He took the impulse, texted me privately, and invited me to perform a concert at the bicycle factory where he works. I followed the impulse, he organised an acoustic piano, and it all turned out just as we had hoped.

About 30 people attended the concert, all sitting respectfully in chairs, most of them were new faces to me.

More information about the concert is on the release: “A month ago, Sebastian, a listener of Home Normal, wrote to me asking whether I could imagine playing a concert in Berlin if he managed to provide a piano. My answer was positive, requesting only that it would not be a grand piano, but rather an old piano longing for some affection. Only a few days later, he and his colleagues picked up an old piano that had been played in a youth club, which was now giving it away for free. In need of a suitable space, they brought it to a workshop in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, owned by the bicycle manufactory where they work. Still in the process of tuning, we decided to hold the concert the next day in the bicycle workshop itself. Every chair around the piano was occupied by very respectful listeners. I am deeply grateful for these connections. Thank you, Sebastian.”

Q: On your Werkstatt-Konzert album, one can hear the creaks of the piano and its wooden sounds. Why did you not polish them away? What do these noises add to the performance?

None of the recordings I’ve released have been done in a studio, and most of them were done on old pianos. You know how it is with old pianos – they make noises. That’s just how they are. Also, as I said, the rooms were originally regular rooms in a house. Depending on where the house is, there could be all kinds of noise coming from outside. I can sometimes edit certain parts that are too annoying, but I very rarely “polish” the sound as you mention. It’s not always possible to take out a certain noise that sounds on top of the piano, and if possible, it can alter the sound a lot. I prefer to keep things as close to how they were in the recording as possible. When I’m working on a track, I sometimes decide to cut out a section if it is too noisy. At a concert, like the Werkstatt-Konzert, the noises are part of the performance and it makes sense to let them in the recording.

Q: There is only one long track on the “Werkstatt-Konzert” album. Is that one long performance, or are these various tracks that were merged together?

It’s just the whole concert, all in one take.

Q: How often do you perform live and on stage? Compared to your albums, what does a concert offer that a listener could not experience otherwise?

I don’t play in many concerts, probably because the kind of music I make isn’t that popular, but also because I like to play in places where it’s nice and quiet (I would never play as Nebel lang on the streets for example). The music I play at concerts is always made on the spot. It’s not a set list of songs I just keep playing over and over again. It requires extra focus and a certain mood to play.

I’ve been moving around quite a lot over the last few years, and sometimes that’s actually led to some great opportunities to play concerts. But it’s only if I know people where I’m going. If I move somewhere and no one knows about Nebel Lang, the chances of playing a concert are pretty rare.

Q: How do audiences typically react to your music at concerts? Is there a particular reaction or impression you hope to create?

Usually, people who come to my concerts already know what kind of music they’re going to hear. Well, at least they know it’s ‘calm’ music. I remember having those situations years ago where people would leave after just a few minutes of music. I always understood they never expected the music to be so calm and meditative. I’ve also experienced the ‘opposite’, where people fall asleep to my music. I see that as a good thing. People generally don’t sleep well, so if my music helps them relax, I’m glad.

These days, when I play a concert, people are pretty respectful. They let the music do its thing and give me space to do my thing. It’s an amazing feeling, and I really appreciate it. After a long concert, I usually find it hard to talk or think clearly in any language, but luckily for now, people don’t expect me to say anything.

Q: Have you ever collaborated with another artist or some additional instrument added to your sound? How was this experience? What might keep you away from doing such a thing?

I used to do collaborative work, sometimes with musicians, but also with writers and photographers, for example.

When it comes to musicians, I've done a couple of collaborations. The only one that's been released so far is "On Paper" with Ishmael Cormack. Other attempts didn't quite go as planned, and some collaborations are still to be released. But yeah, Nebel lang's way of doing music, with improvisation and long form recordings, does make it tricky to play with other people. It's not often I come across people who think the same way about music. I guess I respect the core of Nebel lang as well.

Q: You released another album, Alejado De Todo Mal, in 2025. Could you introduce it a bit? What does the title mean, and how does it compare to Werkstatt-Konzert?

"Alejado de todo mal" means "Far from all harm" and was a release dedicated to a friend who passed away. He was a really kind, politically engaged and creative guy. I was in Argentina when he was there towards the end, and I got the chance to see him. He was doing street poetry, writing for people who passed by. He would be given one word to start with, and then he would improvise a poem on a typewriter. Then he would give the poem to the person, and sometimes they would give him some money in exchange. The album cover is a photo of a photography shop that closed after 50 years in the city. I took the photo when I was passing by one of his stands. It was about 100 metres from where he used to write. Coincidentally, Claudio was also 50 when he passed away.

Q: What are your plans for 2026? Do you have a concert forthcoming?

I've got nothing planned just yet, but I'm organising a couple of gigs: one in Berlin and one in Magdeburg, in Germany, and there's a possibility of playing in Spain, in Valencia. As I said before, I've recently moved to Freiburg im Breisgau. It's got good connections to Switzerland and France, so there are plenty of opportunities for me to explore. If any opportunities come up, I'll be sure to let all listeners know.

Q: Some closing comments?

The latest release has been a collaboration on a compilation by Brandon Locher, called "Ongoing Solos". There are lots of tracks to listen to, in a variety of styles; my contribution as Nebel lang, is track number 40.

Reviews

Agnė Pasaravičienė Quartet — Towards True Self

Lithuania | Jazz, Classic | 2025

Release: `https://agnepasaraviciene.bandcamp.com/album/towards-true-self`

A philosophical concept made flesh? A musical longing for an impossibility? A quick glance over the track titles reveals situational reference points, and with only instrumental music present, this level of assumption is the only foothold available to the listener. This is even more pressing, since the music at Bandcamp does not have any complementary file, which would give insights into the album's background. "Each piece reflects stories, experiences, and sensations from everyday life, inviting listeners to connect with their true selves.", to offer a quote from the release site on Bandcamp, so no help in this regard either. Or to put the malaise in other words, we have to take the music in the way it is offered. As outlined in the title of the release, a quartet makes up this band and the aside from Agnė Pasaravičienė the musicians are: Tadas Pasaravičius on saxophones, Jan Sedlák on double bass and Yannick Ballmann on drums.

Let me start with what I do not like about this release: I have some difficulties in projecting a path from the intentions of the songs to the actual expression. And stylistically the songs feel at times to be more action, than actual reflection or contemplation. Presumably, a Jazz aficionado might disagree, but in a way the songs breathe a shrewd variation that digresses slightly from the actual intention. This is not to say the musicians lack proficiency in handling their instruments, the core problem is rather a sense of direction that is missing at times. Personally, "August Rain" as well as "Get Well Soon" are too banal to me from the outset. While the former opens with an intriguing juxtaposition of the piano and the drums, the overall exhilaration over a longing for cooling on a "scorching" summer's day feels lacking. The same is true for the latter example. The intention becomes immediately clear, but the level of expression does not exceed the level of banalities. Heresy, you want to scream in my general direction. Fine, I can live with that, but I simply do not see (or hear) the intention behind the track titles at times.

Leaving the criticism side, only a few minutes into the opener are necessary for the band to show their proficiency in handling their instruments. Each of the tracks is riddled with bursts and ideas, solo parts and wild musical expressions. Piano, drums, a double bass and a saxophone make up the quartet. None of them have rigidly fixed roles in the music, with the effect that they tend to accompany each other and at times even mimic or repeat the same melody. Counterpoints are created by occasional solo parts as well as moments of minimalism. The melodies have a certain catchiness and eagerness, whose expression generally varies considerably throughout the track. A good example is "Lights Up" with its energetic as well as wild way in which it ends.

However, the songs' basis forms a level of predictability with these occasional sparks of "chaos". Each instrument in its own right is able to leave a mark, but these tend to vary throughout the release. Aside from this, there is one aspect that needs to be discussed separately, and that is the performance of Agnė Pasaravičienė. She plays the piano and she also opens the release. It is also her part to create a kind of basis for the songs; along with the drums, that is. What leaves a slight bitter taste is her constant battle with the saxophone for dominance. The pronounced play of the metal instrument reduces her part to the background at times, due to which the listener might struggle to focus on the facets and nuances. Personally, I find her playing good, but limited. She never gives me the impression of attempting to wander off into uncharted territory, and of preferring to keep the variation measured and maybe even bottled; yes, "August Rain" offers a longer passage of her playing a near solo part. Anyway, Jazz is a genre with which I associate a level of weirdness and chaos, but the sparks are like those of a cigarette lighter than anything else. At the end of "Lights Up" she throws some very accentuated play around, and in "Threat and Opportunity Share the Same Face" the melody offers insights into what is possible once the band dares to be more experimental. On a personal note: get rid of the saxophone, because its play and counterpoint distract unnecessarily from the rest. And no, I do not wish to create a family drama here.

As can be seen from my criticism, I have a slight ambivalent attitude to "Towards True Self". While I am able to appreciate the performance of the musicians, the songs and their intention leave me rather cold.

Allie Chipkin — Cascades - EP

USA | Folk, Acoustic, Pop | 2018

Release: `https://alliechipkin.bandcamp.com/album/cascades-ep`

Slightly melancholic, slightly positive is a bottom line for her music. Be it her hope to plaster over the torrential rains in Seattle — according to hearsay — or her song about a conductor, there tends to be an undercurrent of positivity in her way of expressing things. And yes, she does write wedding songs, just in case you were wondering or did not dare to ask. But now you know. She takes requests, as can be seen on her homepage. Anyway, four tracks of different character and mood appear on Cascades, her second out of two in total, which has seen the light of day in 2018. Nothing fresh since, it seems; probably too many weddings.

In a way, the EP can be described as an assortment of ideas. Each of the songs has its own character and dares to explore her approach of writing music from a different angle. Uplifting, contemplating, energetic and even melancholic are ways to describe the various moods. This is also reflected in the instrumentation. “Seattle”, the opener comes with claps, remember the rain, the endless streams of rain, the splashes that it makes, while the piano in “Conductor” and “Reckless (Lady, be)” helps to mute the atmosphere slightly. A wide variety of instruments and session musicians make an appearance and contribution throughout the EP. Aside from the usual suspects — guitars, bass, drums — even a violin, a viola, and even a Fender Rhodes are granted some contribution.

Nearly a handful of catchy compositions have found their way on this release.

Alum Alu — Ederlezi/Neizturami

Latvia | Folk | 2026

Release: `https://alumalu.bandcamp.com/album/ederlezi-neizturami`

Two tracks to spark an anticipation in 2026. After a pause of more than a thousand days, a rekindling of the fire is performed with the release of a string of singles since 2025. In this case, a single with two tracks, “Ederlezi” and “Neizturami”, offers folk music of a more traditional kind. Eight minutes in total, nearly equally distributed over the two songs, might not be much, but the band does its best to make up for the short running time. A chant-driven performance with at times two vocalists and bayan accordion as well as a mandolin and an acoustic guitar in the background creates an intense harmonic density. “Neizturami” is different with its rockish character and sound. The melody has a gentle flow, offers a nice harmony between the vocals and the instruments, while towards the end even some solo elements were woven into it. The Latvian lyrics add their own peculiar charm.

An appetizer of a release.

Ashe Berton — Pick a Daisy

USA | Acoustic, Americana | 2024

Release: `https://asheberton.bandcamp.com/album/pick-a-daisy`

With roughly twelve minutes and four tracks “Pick a Daisy” feels quite like doing exactly what the title wants us to do. A short and quick act and then the fleeting moment has passed, while the withering flower longs for attention and therefore water. Maybe one should even go so far as to be inspired by the classic children’s game “Loves me, loves me not,” and tear a flower apart in order to know what decision to make.

Straightforward and unpretentious music is offered on this album, which in terms of the genre breathes the easiness of pop, while stylistically it is rooted in americana or folk. Various string instruments and flutes are used by the three musicians, which translates into songs of a gentle calm flow with equally carefully crafted lyrics. Guitar, lap steel as well as various other ones like flute or (bass) clarinet together create music with a slightly different spin. Nuances of americana are there, but the songs dare to venture beyond this genre. Unobtrusive sounds that can follow you through the day like a fresh summer breeze. A solid first release and that is it.

Astwihad — Gatha 1: Asto-Vidatu

Iran | Death Metal, Black Metal | 2023

Release: `https://astwihadproject.bandcamp.com/album/gatha-1-asto-vidatu`

The cover. A lone figure, a vague and incomprehensible display of someone or something, disrupts the endless horizon of a barren, desert landscape. At the outset the scheme reminds of a demon from a fantasy novel, but here displayed in a way as to invoke awe and to evoke dread. This figure’s horns, the cloak, the colour, all together foment this impression. Around its sheer darkness the environment shows a cracked surface of stones or sand, while the blue of the sky appears to be engulfed by a sandstorm. An inhospitable environment if there ever was one.

Though initially granted an auspicious choral sanctity, monolithic blasts wreak havoc once this celebratory moment has passed. An unrelenting performance of black and death metal unravels once the chants are replaced with a wall of guitars and ferocious drum beats. Like a storm the riffs cast aside the initial calmness and push the music forward mercilessly. Two bands could be pointed to as references: Darkspace and Paysage d’Hiver due to how their songs present similar intentions.

“Gatha 1: Asto-Vidatu” comes with three tracks and they all present a distinct similarity in the song-writing: a calm opening juxtaposed with an aggressive and intense musical progression. Especially the keyboards and their pronounced role throughout the tracks are what amplify the impression and the setting. Their space-ambient influenced additional layer in the background does not only set a distinct nuance, but it helps to add a level of tension the guitars would otherwise be unable to create on their own. Also, their permanence is what makes the impact of the soundscapes different and therefore a slightly characteristic element. And the guitars do what they do best in this regard: unleash a dense and unrelenting wall of riffs. The drums join in and offer something equally intense.

It is worth emphasizing how small the role of the vocals here actually is. Astwihad did not fall into the trap of drowning the music with an endless tirade of screams or growls, but the part of the vocals is actually limited to a small and maybe even negligible role. In dark and sinister growls the expression of the texts is done and due to this a further layer of texture is added to the overall multitude of existing ones. Stylistically, their part is closer to death metal than to black metal.

In a way the music gives the impression of attempting to overwhelm the listener. Again and again the lure of a calm presentation is followed by an intense and unrelenting musical performance. And even though the approach becomes somewhat predictable the longer the release takes, the sound and the atmospheric density are still able to compensate for that. Roughly twenty-four minutes of intense music can be found on the 2023 release of the Iranian band. Definitely worth more than a single spin.

Broken Canyon — Surface

USA | Ambient, Drone | 2026

Release: `https://purelifetapes.bandcamp.com/album/surface`

A broken surface. Black, uncertain lines between gravel and dirt. A monochrome picture. Ten tracks and nearly thirty-four minutes appear on this release of uncertain line-movements and uncertain melodies. No horizon to explore, since this place of longing was brought down to Earth.

Fragmented music, only introductory at times one might suspect, flows along the boundaries the band wants to explore. To be experimental appears to be the underlying idea, but the music never ventures onto a different path. Short scenes, short impressions, never somewhere to linger.

Serene music, slightly distorted, portrayed through a veil and therefore slightly muffled, is the way the songs appear. Ambient and drone sounds are accompanied by electronic elements, but somehow all of these appear in a slow and steady flow. No samples set a counterpoint. Oscillating sounds and calm distractions are woven into the fabric. And while there is uncertainty, a comforting relaxation is what remains in the end. The same can also be said of those moments in which electronic beats are accompanied by electronic sounds, which together unravel into glimpses of nuanced presentations.

Longer tracks would have been nice. Snippets are the prominent approach, but these hardly sate the appetite.

Christina Ruf — Dreamwalker's Prism

Austria | Noise, Drone, Ambient | 2026

Release: `https://christinaruf.bandcamp.com/album/dreamwalkers-prism-2`

Lucid and ludic. Harmony and noise. Seven tracks and nearly forty-four minutes appear on Christina Ruf's 2026 release "Dreamwalker's Prism". Impressions split into parts. Maybe even into various REM cycles? Where then is the deep sleep to be found?

"Acoustic Cello, Electric Cello, Electronics, Synths and Viola" unravel threatening and soothing sounds. Schisms of contrasting melodies merged together. Not a stride on the sharpened blade, but rather a dance on an ocean of uncertainty with unexpected ebbs and flows. Even waves and froth.

The cover artwork precedes the confrontation, even though this amalgam of colours does not. Clear as a distorted illusion. In the music there is no common ground, nothing definite to cling to. Sounds vary exceedingly and like in a prism the refractions present dichotomies of commonalities: still a flow of photons, just of a different wave length. So is the music. A flow of drones, an occasional pluck of a string, whirls of soundscapes and interjections of noise would be a way to describe the songs. The distance of ambience that refuses to offer an embrace. Elements lurking beyond a looking glass create a shadow to experience and to listen to. "El", mechanical even, or laboured. A promissory invitation into the underlying currents? "Stygian Blues" offers schisms and refutes the prospect of escape. No flow, only the gasp about an absence of luminance. "There as a Color", a Kazuo reminiscence.

With the anticipation of the cello comes the realization of its existence. The harmonic deviation offers room and space for its sound to breathe. Noise is its freedom. A reviled instrument, one might suspect? Or finally a liberated one? Tormented with a bow, but droning deeply in the background. Follow the rabbit. Take inspiration from "Snail's House".

Questions that need answers. Should one use headphones to experience these songs properly? Should the room be dark? Should one take drugs? One should pay attention, though. Her music is not to be trifled with, nor is it meant to pointlessly

fill a room out of necessity. Hiding in the nuances, a truth can be discovered. Inadmissible sounds hope to reveal some secrets, only vaguely lurking in the refractions.

But what do we actually experience? Where are we in relation to the prism? Like with Plato, but different?

“Wandering. Into deep landscapes. Into unearthly colors and surreal shades.” Her intention.

A musically diverse and captivating album. Impressions to describe, but with no words ever to cling to. Only sounds. Sit back. Give it time. Give it room. Give it a chance.

Couronne de Merde — اتمنى لو ان الرياح تجلي الرماد

France | Electronic, Experimental | 2020

Release: `https://wannamarchi.bandcamp.com/album/-`

What would Robert Fisk have to say about Lebanese music? “BEIRUT, Lebanon — a haunted city.” At some point also called the “Paris of the Middle East”. A place where you can go skiing in the morning and to the beach in the afternoon. A place that has seen better days, that much is certain. A further quote from the release’s Bandcamp entry: “Couronne de Merde casts an unflinching gaze at theocratic and political contradictions. اتمنى لو ان الرياح تجلي الرماد is a poetic documentation and dramatisation of a modern conflict, this late iteration of ancient struggles between Religion and Secularity, Christianity and Islam, Dominance and Freedom.”

Though we see the gun, we never hear it. Never. Also not in the music itself. Or are the electronic elements of noise a representation of the AK-47 displayed on the cover artwork? A weapon used by a person with curly hair to fight and to kill. To attack? To defend? No date and no explanation of the scene is offered, only the unmistakable depiction of someone who has taken up arms and who appears to be willing to use it.

The opener “تعيش رغم الازدراء” sets a unique initial moment and impression. Calm, an ambient atmosphere with a playful tune, while in the background incomprehensible voices add a nuance of exoticism. As can be expected, this serene impression is not to last and already with the second track influences from the noise and industrial genre leave their mark on the songs. Not only in terms of sound, but also in terms of their flow as well as the overall atmosphere. The easy-going intention, presented earlier on, is replaced with something much more sinister and unsettling. This starts with “لا يوجد موت”, but the succeeding tracks all follow in line.

“قوى الكتائب النظامية” increases the tension even more with sounds that mimic the shooting of guns or the shelling by artillery. “أخفضي رأسك” follows a similar path, but the overall sound is slightly different. With chants and other elements, it is possibly a presentation of how normal life and the aspect of war have to coexist here. The next track, “خلال حظر التجول”, shifts in tone considerably. Much darker in expression and character, its sound is much more unsettling than those of some earlier pieces, which were filled with noises that resembled gunfire. A dark layer of industrial over a dark ambient basis leaves a bitter taste, but it is difficult to really put a finger on what the topic might have been. The album closes with a track that offers a song riddled with electronic sounds and beats; quite a stark deviation from the earlier pieces.

Six tracks and roughly twenty-one minutes mean that the topics can only be scratched at the surface. That it is only possible to glimpse into a musical presentation of the inner workings of the city. And not only that: a city threatened or even already burdened by war. Therefore, nuances remain shallow and cannot be presented or rather explored properly. Sadly, the overall complexity has to be reduced to mere glimpses.

A question I asked myself, when listening to this release, was: how does it relate to Beirut? Is there something of the city in the myriad of sounds, the noises, the arrangements? In a way, it all appears interchangeable. Could the music also show Baghdad after the fall of Saddam Hussein? Probably. What about Tripoli?

The stylistic expression of part of the essence of a conflict zone can be found in part of the release, but nothing more. Only a snapshot of the perpetual fighting is portrayed, while the impact on society feels missing. There is only the sound of the war and its noises, while the hustle and bustle of a capital such as Beirut remains sadly absent. In its abstraction, the music has lost its anchor, so to speak. How should one experience the songs with their outer plaque non-existent? Unsettling sounds and noises exist at its core, but these appear to be detached from the place it actually wants to cling to. And this makes the experience of listening to this release slightly disappointing.

Dismal — 遺。白

Hong Kong | Black Metal | 2017

Release: `https://dismalhk.bandcamp.com/album/--2`

One may suspect this album to have fallen through the cracks. A single release in 2017, no officially revealed line-up and even though Pest Productions has re-released “遺。白” twice over the years, one cannot help but wonder whether this has ever made a significant splash outside a small water bowl that is the subgenre Dismal is associated with. A strange and odd piece of “Depressive Black Metal” from Hong Kong is presented here. Aside from the lack of information on the band, there is also a refusal to even let the eager fans know what the band is actually screaming and shouting about.

A plethora of butterflies next to a worn-down face is displayed on the cover artwork. Drawn no less, which adds a volume of bleakness and a kind of muted presentation to the impression. This foreshadows the music that the band vehemently adheres to. A kind whose character refuses to be pleasant and which instead puts an emphasis on depression, suicide, and a variant of self-harm. Parts of the music might appear to be rather extreme at times, and this can especially be due to vocals and their level of expression.

Having said that, one has to acknowledge the amount of variation throughout the album. No endless rows of tormented screams added to every single track, but rather an approach with some additional counterpoints of darker murmurs or growls. Even narrating parts and calm interludes offer a volume of respite from the piercing sounds expressed by the vocalists. One should feel the pain, but only live through it in doses. With the music generally kept on a conventional level in terms of depressive black metal, the music presents a tolerable level of intensity with occasional peaks. There are no intense blast beats with harsh screams and violently lashing out guitars. Instead, accentuated faster played segments appear accompanied by the aforementioned extreme vocals, while the additional rate of energy brought across by the instruments helps to accentuate these.

Character might be a word to emphasize here. “命” takes the listener through a trip of various stages of intensity; “白” offers glimpses of post-black influences and is much more reduced in terms of sound and character. Considering that the latter is the longest one, it is a bit of a surprise how a good portion of this song is really minimalist and even continues to fall back to this level. The other tracks fall somewhat in between. Dismal have a tendency to build up their songs in a certain kind of way, while adding intense as well as harsh guitars later. Generally speaking, the music ventures in the direction of Shining and Funeral Tomb, but dares to be different on a level that makes “遺。白” somewhat distinguishable.

“遺。白” is not a release to gather momentum or attention outside the scene of the depressive black metal genre. And I would suspect that is rather due to the sound as well as the flow of the music. One has to have a liking for their way of doing things. Do I like the release? Well, the vocals tend to wear me down at times, and I find the exuberance of their screams a bit too much of a strain on my patience. Or to put the verdict in a more succinct manner: a so-so album.

Kobaryo — Hyper Hexed Hero

Japan | Electronic, Speedcore, Djent, Hardcore | 2026

Release: `https://hitnex.bandcamp.com/track/hyper-hexed-hero`

Kobaryo’s “Hyper Hexed Hero” — not to be confused with the “Glutinous Gregarious Gabbler” or the “Insanely Incentivized Idiot” — delivers on a grand scale of 2:34 — not hours and minutes, only minutes and seconds — a baffling musical chaos. Not that this Japanese musician is known for holding back or keeping things in check. Indeed, right from the start the track throws barrages of beats at the listener, while short calm interludes add playfulness as well as offer an escape from the unfolding chaos. Kobaryo’s concept is a whirlwind of impressions, beats and sounds, expressed in a disturbingly captivating way. Oddly enough, the wide variety of approaches is what compels the listener to return.

Especially the ever-escalating musical madness in the second half of the track is better experienced than explained. This chaos does not need words.

A musical antidote to sanity.

Kojro/Siwak — Miniatury

Poland | Alternative, Electronic, Poetry | 2015

Release: `https://kojrosiwak.bandcamp.com/album/miniatury`

The Latvian band Jaunība and the Polish project Kojro/Siwak have something in common: poetry. In either case, the texts are rooted in this particular or peculiar way of expressing something. While the former uses contemporary texts from various writers, the 2015 "Miniatury" album is focussed on a single person: Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, a renowned Polish poet from the first half of the 20th century. To quote Wikipedia: "She was known as the 'Polish Sappho' and 'queen of lyrical poetry' during Poland's interwar period."[1]

That marks the basic premise behind the album, but what about the music? Well, the chasm between these two could not be wider. With Jaunība's music presenting a pot-pourri of 70s music, psychedelic parts and trip hop, Kojro/Siwak's approach is much more experimental and rooted in the realm of electronic music. Twelve tracks and a total of nearly twenty-seven minutes have found their way on "Miniatury", with several tracks of a length that is less than one minute. Experimental appears to be the bottom line here.

The most fascinating aspect of this release is how it presents the poetry. With the first two tracks having simple electronic beats as a basis and some other rhythmic sounds or noises as counterpoints, the direction shifts with the third track, "Fale". Layers of drone and ambient play a more important role, with the beats serving as a supporting facet. "Kobieta z cyrku" as well as "Ofelia" break with all convention and offer recitations of poetry over a variety of sounds at different locations. This gives a kind of impression of what to expect, because two persons behind this project, Michał Siwak and Dominika Kojro, like to keep matters at bay.

In terms of the sounds, the "music" or the "songs" can be described as an amplifier of the poetry. With expressions that are limited to a small set, their character is generally calm and minimalist. Stark contrasts and intense expressions do not appear throughout the album — not even in the case of "Łzy", Polish for "Tears". Also, the noise elements do not interfere with anything.

But noise can also be expressed by the vocals. And leaving aside the throat-clearing in "Ślepa", the two male and female voices express the poetry with various levels of narration and singing. No screaming, shouting, moaning, or some other type of vocal sound is granted room on this release. Emotionally, it is therefore difficult to get a "spark". Calm and controlled is a way to describe their approach. And yes, I am only partly convinced by this, because it would have been nice to have a broader set of sounds and approaches.

"Miniatury" offers only what the title promises, and this is disappointing. While the music comes with an intriguing promise, the presentation of the album, in its digital version at least, lacks the depth needed to understand the concept as well as the lyrics or the poetry. Were complete pieces used? Or only fragments? Explanation: none. Sure, a native speaker would be able to understand the vocal expressions, but everyone else is left outside. And this is somewhat disappointing. Jaunība's approach is different, as the texts as well as the authors can be found next to all the tracks on the Bandcamp release.

To sum it up: "Miniatury" offers interesting music, but comes with a subpar presentation.

Best tracks: "Kula rewolweru", due to its whooping beats and the interplay of both members.

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[1] Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Maria_Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska&oldid=1343611018

Livija Gemma — Dangus jau rausta

Lithuania | Alternative, Electronic, Acoustic, Pop, Poetry | 2025

Release: `https://livijagemma.bandcamp.com/album/dangus-jau-rausta`

A welcoming release riddled with sounds and songs, whose character is rather contrary to the album's reference: Dangus jau rausta. Indeed, "The Sky is Turning Red" is never felt throughout each of the tracks. This idea of calming down, laying the weary bones to rest and contemplate the day that has just gone by. Rather the contrary appears to be the case: a free-spirited and rather eager ghost roams a good portion of the album's songs here. In fact, this being appears to have the intention to befuddle the listener in every song with a fresh set of strange nuances.

A long list of tags appears on the album's Bandcamp page, and they tell of a complex story. "acoustic, alternative, electronic, indie pop & folk" just to name four of these and by merely looking at these it is difficult to project a specific type of music. Take the opener. An initial sensation of distant beats is later accompanied by Livija's voice, while additional noise and distorted vocals add a sense of tension. "Idilė" comes with a lot of energy and a captivating mix of elements. From there on, though, it moves in an entirely different direction. Of course. How else could it have been.

A quote from the release's site at Bandcamp: "This 11 track Ambient Pop album showcases Livija's ability to form sound as a fluid and expansive medium for her melodic narratives and poetic lyrics to navigate and flow through. Atmospheric, melancholy-filled soundscapes invite listeners to experience the contemplative and complex emotional states, encouraging introspection and emotional reflection."

And she is toying with the listener. The title track "Dangus jau rausta" is a twenty-eight-second (!!!) instrumental (!!!) which succeeds the opener and is a pure ambient piece. Why in this kind of way and length? "Laukimas", the third track, heads off in a different direction, and is able to bring the album back on track; on "a" track, because I do not think there is "the" track. Anyway, along with "Liminalù" as well as "Pasilikt sapne" it offers her most compelling performance. Each of these has a distinct musical character and style that will grab the attention of the listener. Easy-going, lucid, playful and captivating are words to describe these three songs. Maybe they have a melancholic undercurrent, but the vocals and their rhythm are able to plaster over this. One small thing: "Liminalù" shows some hints towards future funk due to the sound of the drums and the atmosphere. "Pasilikt sapne" on the other hand is rather upbeat and surprisingly rhythmic. So much more dusk, right?

Vocals and lyrics need to be discussed. The entire release is in Lithuanian, and this adds a peculiar charm. Of course, it is difficult to judge a language from one mere piece of music, but it helps to get a first impression. The presentation should also not be swept under the carpet, and Livija does a good job here as well. Variations in the expression of the texts as well as additional layers of vocals help to maintain a level of fascination and variation throughout the album.

"Dangus jau rausta" offers a pot-pourri of sounds and approaches. There is no "one-fits-all" type of song to be found here, but the work also does not feel like a compilation. In a way, there is a certain sense of different vantage points being taken and of re-examining the concept from various angles. Maybe there is a certain way that dusk plays a role in Lithuanian culture or that there is a metaphor or expression that surrounds "rausta", conjugated from "rausti", but in terms of the atmosphere it never truly feels like this. Perhaps these impressions lurk in some nuances or crevices, but from a broader perspective, the emphasis is rather on expressing it in an energetic and engaging way.

All in all, the verdict is: Captivating. Bewildering. A wonderful release.

Odna — Requiem For A Doomed World

Australia | Funeral Doom Metal, Death Doom Metal, Ambient | 2025

Release: `https://odnametal.bandcamp.com/album/requiem-for-a-doomed-world`

Henrique Alvim Correa's "Martian Gets the Girl" from his illustrations of "The War of the Worlds" is definitely not commonly used. The depiction of a cephalopod-like creature with tentacles wrapped around the waist of a naked woman

brings up memories of Hokusai's "The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife", but here a violent overwhelming of a woman takes place; as can be seen from the traces of blood on her waist. This depiction and the book set the stage for the music and attempt to further amplify the impression of death and destruction. A swan song for a dying world.

Funeral doom metal it is then, or this is the genre tag, which appears on the band's entry at the Metal Archives. Slow, desolate and atmospheric music is what can be expected here. Or can it really? It would be nice, were the performance clear-cut and definite. But why should it be? Whilst initially a sluggish and dreadful slime of notes oozes out of the speaker, the movements of the sounds are much faster and spasmodic than one might expect from music of this sort. Rather like doom/death the sounds progress at times, which adds quite a different spin to the perception of this release. Though this is not a common theme across the three songs on the debut album of the musician behind this project. In over thirty-three minutes, the musician behind this project offers a wide variety of sound and concepts, which has its ups and downs.

"Dystopian Lament", the opener of this release, is a mixed bag. In a way the flow of the melodies, the juxtaposition of slower and faster elements highlights the overall intention of the band as well as its willingness to dare to be slightly different. There is the catch. With some drastic switches in the dynamics, a tension and intensity appear that disrupt the dark mood of the funeral doom metal. All of a sudden the riffs pounce forward, which is especially bewildering considering how this concept diminishes the established atmosphere of the music. The perception is rather that there is a loss by moving in that direction, without gaining anything in return.

Leaving this one track behind, the progress of the music is more towards the slower approach, though some small additional bursts can again be found in the second track "Arbiter Of Destruction". Aside from that, the guitars do what they are supposed to do and add the required level of intensity. Generally slowly played chords, accompanied by equally dynamically limited drums, are the main elements of the music. Especially the guitars, with their overwhelming droning sound, leave a deep impression on the listener; the last track "Elegy" with its focus on a steadier pace is a good example in this regard. Keyboards add a layer of depth to the atmosphere, while the occasional vocals, a kind of growling, work as a counterpoint to the sound and flow of the music.

"Requiem For A Doomed World" is not a pure funeral doom metal release, but this should not discourage someone from giving this release a try. Especially towards the end, the atmosphere is able to "shine", but the opener with its switch between faster and slower movements feels like an alien element. If one can look beyond that, then this debut album is a solid performance with some flaws.

Vika Kuchak — aspirine

USA | Ambient, Drone, Experimental, Electronic | 2026

Release: `https://fuselab.bandcamp.com/album/aspirine`

Music through a looking glass, or should we take the music "with a glass and some water"? Surely we could "swallow" "the pill" or read the given pre-/de-scription more closely. There is a prospect of the album being a remedy to some ill-fated or even ghastly ailment. Maybe this is what Vika Kuchak wants us to do. But she does not openly reveal the meaning, since both the cover and the track titles offer riddles on a different level. At least an affirmation of the prospect is delivered.

Or is it up to electronic beats to deliver the soothing element? "electronic, experimental, idm, lo-fi house" are the tags attributed to this release, and they give a slight indication of the type of music to be expected here. A loftiness and easiness breathe through the songs, whose titles indicate a slight contemplative direction. The overall atmosphere and the foundational layers take their cue from drone and ambient. Beats and electronic noises appear on top of these, and their character differs significantly over the course of the album. There is the dreamy "любовь до гроба", while "мои слова ft. FMSAO" sets an intense counterpoint with some proper beats.

As can be imagined, only parts of the music are truly captivating and will grab the attention of the listener immediately. The intention behind the tracks does not hinge on this alone. Stylistically, the songs breathe an air of melancholic lucidity, whose undercurrent likes to engage, but does not fully embrace this sentiment. With reverb in the voice to add a hollowness to the performance, a shift into a slight transcendence is established. There is a move beyond the apparent and the expected. In each of the tracks something new emerges out of thin air and the best example in this regard is the last track, which happens to also be the title track.

Unlike in the other songs, the album closes with sacral recitations. Though, the first moments mimic the earlier established pattern of drone/ambient and electronic sounds, soon after that female vocals take over and present music not too far away from a concept inspired by “Gregorian chants”. In a way, this deviation, or is it a venture?, feels like a mocking of all that had been done before on this release. Even though electronic facets appear, their minimalist play merely accompanies the vocals and their distinct way of expressing the lyrics. Nothing a premonition could ever have foreshadowed.

Different. Definitely. Unmistakably different. “Stels”, her 2024 release, had a much stronger focus on electronic music. Alright, I am undercutting it a bit. These are basically two distinct bands. This latest presentation reveals a surprising shift in direction, sound, and character. The prominence of the earlier approach has been substituted with atmospheric ambient/drone sounds, while electronic elements work as a supporting facet. This, as can be imagined, has given the music a unique focus and intensity. There is now more room for the sounds to unfold their charm. How the last track fits into this, can only be fathomed. It is down to the listener to pick sides and parts here. I would guess that it comes down to personal preferences. That is all I can offer. My choice would be “aspirine”, because the song and atmosphere are more to my liking.

Wiebke Schröder Trio — Tales Untold

Germany | Jazz | 2026

Release: `https://wiebkeschrdertrio.bandcamp.com/album/tales-untold`

Yes, the opener gives the intentions away and the music follows suit. “Aufbruch”, here not a hectic and a piece of missing luggage, a lack of time due to endless fiddling around or even a final argument about the destination and whether it had really been a good choice to travel there. Instead, “Tales Untold”, a Jazz album, opens in a calm kind of way and as would be expected from musicians, who reside in the plains of Northern Germany, in a muted and laid-back manner. Wiebke Schröder Trio are from that area and offer some explanation in regard to their album and what the ideas behind it had been: “Ähnlich wie ein Vexierbild dazu einlädt Verborgenes zu entdecken, so entspringen ihre nuancierten Klangwelten zwischen Modern Jazz, Klassik und Neuer Musik nicht selten der Introspektion.”, which translates to “Just as a picture-puzzle invites the viewer to discover what is hidden, so her nuanced soundscapes—situated between modern jazz, classical, and contemporary music—often spring from introspection.” Or to put the intention behind this release, in other words: do not twiddle your thumbs and pay some proper attention.

Unobtrusive music flow through the album performed by three persons with each an instrument assigned to them: Wiebke Schröder on piano, Silas Jakob on drums and Michael Bohn on double bass. Seven tracks and forty-six minutes of music played by them. While the focus resides on Wiebke and her performance, longer passages of the other instruments with different levels of versatility are allowed to have an impact. Playful and maybe even slightly contemplative tunes dominate the songs. While it would be too far-fetched to refer to certain passages as “solo-parts”, they exude a definite musical focus on a single musical character. In “Time Flies” this task is taken up by the piano, while in “Spring Rain” the double bass is able to shine. And the three musicians leave no doubt about their musical versatility, as each of the tracks is riddled with small nudges to “show off”. They know what they are doing, and they execute it on a high level with a good amount of variations. The piano is the driving factor most of the time, while also the others are able to have solo parts. Overall though, it is up to the piano to set the tone, and the other ones follow in line. Yes, small deviations exist, but this only foments the argument.

Yes, these three musicians know how to handle their instruments, I give them that, but actually I expect more. They play Jazz and not black metal; thus speaketh the metalhead gone jazz-critic. And to make matters worse, I could raise the bar even higher here: look up Wiebke and her vita. “Tales Untold” is all she is able to offer in terms of song-writing and arrangements? How is “A Child” so banal in its invention, its complexity and its facets? A gentle flow of sounds, counterpointed with some occasional interjections of solos? An illusory projection that lands on established banalities? That is it? “Missed Chance” falls into the same trap. The pain, the pondering, the contemplation, the inability to compensate for the missed opportunity are never felt. Just all the same progression of sounds and tunes. Smooth, pleasant, with a nice and gentle passing. Dismal from Hong Kong, covered in the same edition of the magazine as this release, would disagree. I cannot criticize Agnė Pasaravičienė and let Wiebke Schröder get away with it. This would undermine my argument in both directions. What bothers me in either case is the sheer narrowness in musical depth of the songs. Counterpoints are missing. Something to add a proper “other”. A spice to add nuance and flavour. Rahel Talts’ “Back and Forth” comes with a guitar player and his solo part adds a much-needed and very astute deviation and accentuation of the

jazz elements. Due to this, the sound and therefore the perception is broader and less claustrophobic than on “Tales Untold”.

The cover artwork is a palimpsest of colours, with each of the band members representing one. Red. Blue. Yellow. Red is Wiebke, while Michael is blue and Silas is yellow; sort of. There is also black, but that is a different story. The first three colours appear splotched, mixed and slightly diluted with water and show signs of droplets as well as flow, and are arranged next to images of the band members. In a way, the music and the visuals have this in common. The music on this release has a charming flow and captivating melodies. Though there still remains the aspect of the “Vexierbild”, the picture puzzle, so prominently brought up by the band. I do not see any absent piece in the display. All I see are colours and instruments that mingle, but a hidden and mysterious other fails to reveal itself. Indeed, one cannot mistake the musical proficiency of the musicians involved, but there is a fly in the ointment: the focus of the music is too narrow for my taste. With Rahel Talts’ “Back and Forth” Estonian Jazz music, still vividly in the back of my head, I prefer her Baltic versatility over the sounds from the plains of Northern Germany.

Nerd Data

Countries & Genres

Countries

Name	Count
Australia	1
Austria	1
France	1
Germany	2
Hong Kong	1
Iran	1
Japan	1
Latvia	1
Lithuania	2
Poland	4
USA	4

Genres

Name	Count
Acoustic	6
Alternative	2
Ambient	5
Americana	1
Black Metal	2
Classic	1
Death Doom Metal	1
Death Metal	1
Djent	1
Drone	4
Electronic	5
Experimental	2
Folk	5
Funeral Doom Metal	1
Hardcore	1
Instrumental	3
Jazz	2
Neoclassical	1
Noise	1
Poetry	2
Pop	2
Speedcore	1

Linguistic Data on Reviews

Band / Release	Words	Sentences	TTR	Lex.D	Hapax	Category
Agnė Pasaravičienė Quartet *Towards True Self*	797	40	0.455	0.517	0.672	**long**
Allie Chipkin *Cascades - EP*	254	15	0.63	0.52	0.781	**short**
Alum Alu *Ederlezi/Neizturami*	161	9	0.689	0.534	0.847	**short**
Ashe Berton *Pick a Daisy*	191	9	0.712	0.565	0.801	**short**
Astwihad *Gatha 1: Asto-Vidatu*	480	25	0.558	0.552	0.769	**medium**
Broken Canyon *Surface*	200	16	0.675	0.605	0.8	**short**
Christina Ruf *Dreamwalker's Prism*	425	53	0.576	0.581	0.792	**medium**
Couronne de Merde اتمنى لو ان الرياح تجلي الرماد	696	46	0.517	0.539	0.778	**medium**
Dismal 遺。白	562	28	0.509	0.539	0.731	**medium**
Kobaryo *Hyper Hexed Hero*	144	8	0.694	0.611	0.8	**short**
Kojro/Siwak *Miniatury*	594	38	0.513	0.562	0.734	**medium**
Livija Gemma *Dangus jau rausta*	660	41	0.495	0.547	0.725	**medium**
Odna *Requiem For A Doomed World*	566	27	0.491	0.521	0.727	**medium**
Sarama *Four Seasons*	753	51	0.441	0.511	0.684	**long**
Sarama *Path of Years*	579	34	0.491	0.547	0.704	**medium**
Vika Kuchak *aspirine*	555	40	0.521	0.539	0.713	**medium**
Wiebke Schröder Trio *Tales Untold*	876	52	0.476	0.547	0.703	**long**
Avg	**499.588**	**31.294**	**0.555**	**0.549**	**0.751**	

Colophon

A Dead Spot of Light
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